



FAMILY MATTERS Michigan Adoption Day helps local family make it official

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Jaimie Williamson pounded the judge's gavel and declared her adoption proceedings adjourned.

It was just one of the perks of being adopted on Michigan Adoption Day.

"I'm really going to let you do something special," Circuit Judge John McBain said as he invited Jaimie to sit at his bench and strike the gavel.

"There is nothing more pleasurable in my job than finalizing adoptions," McBain said.

Family Court judges McBain and Susan Vandercook each conducted ceremonies for families putting the last touch on the adoption process. Some were arranged by Jackson County Circuit Court Family Division and others by Lutheran Social Services.

Adoption Day, celebrated across the nation, is set aside during Thanksgiving week to promote adoption.

David and Tracey Williamson have been married three years. He has a child in another state, and she had three daughters and a son: Samantha, 15; Dylan, 13; Jaimie, 11; and Cheyenne, 10.

David adopted Cheyenne last year, and Jaimie on Tuesday.

"The girls came to us with the idea," David said as the family enjoyed refreshments and Jaimie opened a gift package from Trinity Wesleyan Church. They called him Dad long before any papers were filed.

Earlier, in McBain's courtroom, the family was too emotional to speak, but great-grandmother Janet Watts stepped forward.

"To Dave, thank you for stepping up and being a real man. There are many fathers in the world, but few men," she said. "You are a good person and you will do the best you can."

Most adoptions are within biological families, or foster families. In cases where parents are not fit, relatives are the first choice.

"We do need more foster parents and families willing to adopt, especially older children," county adoption coordinator Terralyn Brown said.

While there are waiting lists for private adoptions of babies, parents who think they might want to adopt can expedite the process by first becoming foster parents.

Officials for Lutheran Social Services said the agency has placed more state wards from foster homes into adoptive homes than any other agency. It arranged 224 adoptions in 2004.

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